

## Agency Approaches to Achieving Our Goals

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# Agency Approaches to Achieving Our Goals<sup>1</sup>

Achieving the Agency's goals is a vast undertaking that will require a wide range of approaches and substantial human, capital, and technological resources. We believe the goals can be reached with our anticipated resources. To focus our efforts, EPA has developed shorter term objectives that describe in greater detail the specific measurable outcomes that we plan to achieve over the next few years. These objectives define how the Agency will spend its resources, and provide a guide for assessing whether or not we are reaching our goals. To ensure that the objectives are the most effective way to focus our resources and activities over the next few years, EPA's senior managers used the following criteria in selecting them:

- *Will they reduce risk to human health and the environment?*
- *Will they help achieve EPA's statutory mandates?*
- *Will they improve the quality and quantity of services delivered?*

With these criteria, EPA has compiled a set of objectives that are key to achieving our goals. The following section describes for each goal: (1) the objectives that were selected to achieve the goal, (2) what will be accomplished by achieving these objectives, (3) how EPA will go about meeting the objectives and (4) Agency plans for measuring our performance.

In the past, EPA has not generally set specific numerical targets such as those embodied in many of the objectives in this Strategic Plan. However, GPRA strongly encourages agencies to establish measurable, quantitative goals and objectives as part of the strategic planning process. Accordingly, in compliance with GPRA, EPA has set numerical targets for a significant number of specific objectives in this Strategic Plan, consistent with EPA's statutory authority to protect human health and the environment and to administer environmental, human health, and other programs. In establishing numerical targets, EPA considered its statutory mandates and authorities and utilized the best available scientific and technical information.



## Relationship Between General Goals and Annual Performance Goals

EPA's long-term strategic goals will be used as the basis to establish the Agency's annual performance goals and will be reflected in the day-to-day functions and activities of its managers and staff. The Agency's FY 1999 Annual Plan will describe specific annual performance goals, annual measures of outputs and outcomes, and activities aimed at achieving the performance goals that will be carried out during the year. The Annual Plan will be linked directly to the Agency's budget request and planned program activities. The Annual Performance Reports will track progress towards meeting the goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan.

<sup>1</sup>Statutory and other authorities for EPA's goals are found at the end of this section.



Annual performance goals will reflect the progress that EPA commits to making toward achieving long-term goals and objectives. At least one annual performance goal is being developed for each of EPA's objectives. The annual performance goals will be used by managers to determine how well a program or activity is doing in accomplishing its intended results. The annual performance goals will inform Congress and our stakeholders of the expected level of achievement for the significant activities covered by the objective.

## Key External Factors

The ability of the Agency to achieve its strategic goals and objectives depends on several factors over which the Agency has only partial control or little influence. EPA relies heavily on partnerships with states, tribes, local governments and regulated parties to protect the environment and human health. In addition, EPA's success often depends on other Federal agencies that have environmental responsibilities, as well as other countries and international organizations with which the United States shares environmental goals. This plan discusses the mechanisms and programs that the Agency employs to assure that our partners in environmental protection will have the capacity to conduct the activities needed to achieve the objectives. However, as noted, EPA often has limited control over these entities. In addition, much of the success of EPA programs depends on the voluntary cooperation of the private sector and the general public.

EPA's ability to achieve the goals and objectives is also predicated on an adequate level of resources for direct program implementation by EPA as well as for delegated programs. The objectives in this plan are based on current funding levels. If appropriations are lower or different from requested, some objectives may be difficult or impossible to achieve. Other factors that could delay or prevent the Agency's achievement of some objectives include: lawsuits that delay or stop EPA's and/or State partners' planned activities; new or amended legislation; and new commitments within the Administration. Economic growth and changes in producer and consumer behavior, such as shifts in energy prices or automobile use, could have an influence on the Agency's ability to achieve several of the objectives within the timeframe specified.

Large-scale accidental releases (such as large oil spills) or rare catastrophic natural events (such as volcanic eruptions) could, in the short term, impact EPA's ability to

achieve the objectives. In the longer term, new environmental technology, unanticipated complexity or magnitude of environmental problems, or newly identified environmental problems and priorities could affect the timeframe for achieving many of the goals and objectives.



## GOAL 1: Clean Air

**The air in every American community will be safe and healthy to breathe. In particular, children, the elderly, and people with respiratory ailments will be protected from health risks of breathing polluted air. Reducing air pollution will also protect the environment, resulting in many benefits, such as restoring life in damaged ecosystems and reducing health risks to those whose subsistence depends directly on those ecosystems.**

### Importance of this Goal

Air pollution continues to be a widespread public health and environmental problem in the United States. Air pollution can cause premature death, cancer, long-term damage to respiratory and reproductive systems, and difficulty with breathing. Air pollution also reduces visibility, damages crops and buildings, and is deposited on the soil and in water bodies where it affects the chemistry of the water and impacts resident life forms.